

Rhodora

JOURNAL OF

THE NEW ENGLAND BOTANICAL CLUB

Vol. 5

May, 1903

No. 53

LORIN LOW DAME.

F. S. COLLINS.

(With Portrait.)

LORIN LOW DAME, the son of Samuel and Mary Anne (Gilman) Dame, was born in Newmarket, New Hampshire, March 12, 1838. His father was a descendant of Samuel Dame, who settled in Dover about 1630; Governors Simon Bradstreet and Thomas Dudley of Massachusetts were ancestors of his mother. In 1846 the family removed to Lowell, Massachusetts, and Lorin completed the full course of the public schools, fitting for college at the High School, entering Tufts College in 1856, and graduating at the head of his class in 1860. In the same year he became principal of the High School at Braintree, Massachusetts, where he taught two years, and then resigned the position to begin the study of law. In 1863 he was married to Miss Isabel Arnold of Braintree, and in the same year he was commissioned Second Lieutenant in the Fifteenth Massachusetts Battery. He saw active service in the Gulf States and in Tennessee, was promoted to First Lieutenant, and mustered out in August, 1865; the same year he became principal of the Lexington High School, a position which he held for three years. He was principal of the Nantucket High School for two years, of the Stoneham High School for six years, and in 1876 was chosen principal of the Medford High School, the position which he held for the rest of his life. The high standard of efficiency the school has attained during his administration and its remarkable equipment, both from the material and from the aesthetic point of view, are due very largely to his judgment and taste, and to the complete confidence felt in him by his pupils and graduates, and indeed, by all with

whom he came in contact. His death, January 27, 1903, without suffering and with no previous impairment of his abilities, was what he would have chosen for himself, could he have made the choice. Mrs. Dame and four daughters survive him.

Every boy has the collecting spirit, at one time or another, and in Mr. Dame's case it first took the form of insect collecting; but even in his school days at Lowell he did some collecting of plants, and botany then soon superseded entomology. Even in his roughest campaigning in the south, he would notice the trees and flowers, and mention them in his letters home. At Lexington he began to collect with a definite intention of becoming familiar with the plants of the region: then the Nantucket flora, with its many peculiar forms in a limited area, especially attracted him, and thereafter botany was his one especial interest, outside of his family and his professional relations.

I first met him at a meeting of the Middlesex Field Club, formed for promoting interest in the botany of the county; we were together in many field excursions, and in 1882 we undertook the preparation of a county flora, which was published in 1888 under the auspices of the Middlesex Institute, the successor of the Field Club. Practically all our spare time for these six years was devoted to this work, and I learned to appreciate thoroughly his many noble and lovable characteristics. Intellectually, thoroughness was perhaps his strongest feature; no amount of time or work was too much to give to get the facts; nothing was allowed to go into the "copy" until every possible question had been answered. Naturally, we had from various quarters lists of species that would be very interesting additions to our local flora, but unless good evidence could be brought forward for them, he was inexorable, and they remained in the file known to us as the "rogues' gallery." Occasionally some new evidence would transfer a plant to the accepted list, but the number of the incorrigible finally bore quite a large proportion to the number included in the printed work. During the preparation of this work he took especial charge of the trees, and from that time, while not losing his interest in general botany, he made the trees a specialty.

I was not associated with him in his later publications, but I know that the same care, patience and judgment were used in the folio volume, *Typical Elms and other Trees of Massachusetts*, and in the *Handbook of the Trees of New England*, both of which he prepared

in connection with Henry Brooks; the same was the case with smaller papers, chiefly on botanical or historical subjects, published in magazines; the history of the Middlesex Canal published in the Bay State Monthly, Nov., 1884, is a model of a clear, accurate, readable monograph.

He was an excellent classical scholar, and had a good knowledge of modern languages; a fine mathematician, and well read in the best literature. Though exacting in his requirements in regard to the work either of himself or of others, he had always a kindly spirit towards the worker; indeed, one cannot think of him as having an unkindly thought even to those of whose aims and methods he disapproved.

With the exception of observations during trips to Nova Scotia in 1900 and Newfoundland in 1902, his botanical work was done in New England; a visit to Europe in 1880, mostly on foot through England and Scotland, was for recreation, not for science, but his journal shows that he was always noticing the flowers and trees with whose names he was familiar, but which he had never seen growing wild. It is doubtful if any one else was as well acquainted as he with our New England trees, as they grow uncultivated; and the many summers he spent at Nantucket had made him familiar with its curiously rich flora, with very limited stations for the rarer species; probably no one else knew them as well as he did.

For nine years he was trustee of Tufts College; in 1866 he received from the College the degree of Master of Arts, and in 1902 of Doctor of Science; he was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa and Zeta Psi societies; a member of the Boston Society of Natural History, the Medford Historical Society, and an original member of the New England Botanical Club.

Though at first sight his manner seemed somewhat reserved, he had warm friends in many and widely separated quarters, and his loss will be felt in all. President Capen's address in the Tuftonian and the memorial notice by the Massachusetts Schoolmasters' Club are tributes of deep personal feeling as well as of professional appreciation; the Nantucket fishermen will miss one who was always a welcome companion on a cruise; a host of his pupils will cherish his memory; all will miss an honest, modest, able, lovable man.